

UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION FOR

"FLAG CADDY"

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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

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The present invention relates generally to storage devices. More specifically, the present invention pertains to storage devices that protect flags. The present invention is particularly, though not exclusively, useful as a means for providing flags and flag poles with protection against damage or
10 destruction and providing a convenient storage location.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Flags have long been used to show support for a country. For example, patriotism in the United States of America has been predominantly
15 demonstrated by persons waving a U.S. flag or placing a U.S. flag outside of their home, school or workplace. Additionally, state flags sometimes accompany the U.S. flag to show support of that state. More recently, various local, college, Olympic or professional sports teams have produced flags with their motto, design or name affixed so that persons can exhibit

their support for that team. In addition, flags with holidays and events are becoming more popular, such as Thanksgiving and the birth of a boy or girl.

A modern trend that helps explain the significant increase in flag purchases over the last 2-3 years is called "nesting". "Nesting" is the desire of a person to make his or her home an attractive and comforting focal point. For example, there is an increase in the amount of persons who desire more visual attention from neighbors and persons passing by. Traditionally, this visual attention was accomplished by designing and maintaining a beautiful garden or front yard, painting the exterior of the house or bleaching the driveway. Lately, the visual attention is gained by signs and flags. In addition to the traditional flags, this push for visual attention includes flags with cars, animals and people. The use of complicated graphics and color schemes increase the attention-getting characteristic of the flag, however, makes the flags more susceptible to dirt and damage from contact with other items during storage.

The increase in the number of flags used by one person, susceptibility to damage, discoloration, and cost has lead to various developments in flag storage devices. For example, U.S. Patent No. D440,184 (Patent '184) was granted to Jones et al for the invention entitled "Flag Display And Storage Housing". Patent '184 uses a cylindrical storage housing that opens to allow

a flag to extend from the housing base. When the flag use is completed, the flag is placed back inside of the open housing, which is then closed to protect the flag. Although Patent '184 protects an inserted flag, the design does not allow the flag and housing to be moved from one location to another, will not provide protection for multiple flags, does not protect the flag from being wrinkled and a detached flag pole cannot be attached for its protection.

Another example of a flag storage device is U.S. Patent No. 3,996,882 (Patent '882), which was granted to Martin et al for the "Flag Storage and Display Device". Patent '882 discloses a flag pole with two sections that both include motors so that the top section pivots from a vertical to a horizontal position and then rotates around a vertical axis to aid in the attachment or removal of a flag. Patent '882's protection is limited to the installation and removal of a flag from a flag pole. Patent '882, however, does not protect a flag from any damage or destruction that may occur from storage of such a flag. Moreover, Patent '882 does not provide a convenient storage unit.

A final example of flag storage devices is U.S. Patent No. 3,599,599 (Patent '599), which issued to Jones for an invention entitled "Flag Storage and Display Housing". Patent '599 is visually similar to Patent '184 and also includes an attached flagstaff that pivotally mounts to the housing base and

allows the flagstaff to tilt in various angles. Protection of a flag using Patent '599 is insufficient for the same reasons that Patent '184 is insufficient.

More specifically, Patent '599 does not allow the flag and housing to be moved from one location to another, multiple flags cannot be stored simultaneously to prevent damage to the flags, there is no protection for the flag against wrinkles and a detached flag pole cannot be attached and protected.

Accordingly, it is one object of the present invention to provide a flag caddy that simultaneously protects multiple flags from damage and destruction during storage.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a flag caddy that simultaneously protects multiple flags from getting discolored, dirty or wrinkled during storage.

It is an additional object of the present invention to provide a flag caddy that protects a detached flag pole.

It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a flag caddy that allows convenient storage of multiple flags, providing for inspection, access and removal of one of a collection of many flags within the device.

SUMMARY OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

The flag caddy of the present invention is rectangular in shape and opens on one side to expose a series of horizontal flag rods, each of which support a hanging flag simultaneously. In addition, a flag pole storage sleeve
5 is formed on the exterior back wall so that a detached flag pole may be inserted for storage. A hook, or hanger, is attached to the top of the exterior to allow the device to be stored in a closet or on a nail or other hook point in the garage.

The flag caddy of the present invention produces many benefits,
10 including the protection of multiple flags from damage and destruction, protection from dirt and wrinkles, a convenient storage unit is created, and protection of a detached flag pole.

A major benefit that the flag caddy provides is protection for multiple flags from damage and destruction. After the use of a flag, whether a U.S.
15 flag, state flag or sports flag, a person will typically fold the flag and place it on a shelf in the closet or garage. Other items are sometimes placed on top of the flag, such as other flags, linen or books. The weight of the other item(s), temperature of the air and amount of time can cause a flag to become brittle and tear. In addition, as time increases between uses, people
20 often forget where the flag is located and place objects onto the flag that can tear or destroy a flag, such as oil or sharp tools. However, instead of

placing the flag on a shelf where other objects may be stacked on the flag, using the present invention, a flag can be hung with multiple other flags so that only half the flag's weight will be attributed to the flag. Half of the flag's weight is possible by hanging half of the flag over the flag rod.

5 Further, the flags are protected by a housing that completely surrounds the hanging flags and prevents contact between other objects and the flags. Therefore, the flag are protected from damage or destruction that may otherwise be caused by contact from other objects or exposure to light.

A second major benefit of the flag caddy is that the hanging flags will
10 be protected from dirt and wrinkles. During normal storage, a flag would get dirty from dust that accumulates and wrinkled because the flag was not folded or was folded too many times. The result is an increase in cost when the owner must take the flag to the cleaners and can increase the risk of discoloration from the chemicals used by cleaners. Hence, the increased
15 cost and risk are avoided by hanging the flag(s) in a protective housing that excludes dirt and does not require excessive folding, such as the protection gained from the flag caddy.

A third major benefit of the flag caddy is to provide a convenient storage unit where multiple flags can be centrally stored. As discussed
20 above, one or multiple flags are usually stored on shelves in the closet or

garage and are often forgotten. When the flag cannot be easily located, replacement flags are sometimes purchased. However, providing a convenient storage unit that is easily identifiable and can be hung in a closet or on a nail in the garage would greatly decrease the time required to locate the flag(s) when needed and decrease cost from replacement flags.

Another major benefit from the flag caddy is the protection of a detached flag pole by inserting the flag pole into a flag pole storage sleeve at the back or side of the housing. Most flag poles used at residences or workplaces are around sixty-two (62) inches long, between 7/8 and one (1) inch in diameter and are held in position by a mount that is screwed, glued or nailed to a wall (interior or exterior). The flag poles are inserted and detached from the mount by threads on the bottom end of the flag pole. Other mounts may have a clip that secure the flag pole. When a flag is removed after use, the flag pole is also removed.

Finding a safe location to store the flag pole may often be a challenging endeavor because kids or other persons mistake the flag pole for a bat, stake or tool, which results in the bending or breaking of the flag pole, or it may simply be misplaced during periods of non-use. However, the problem of flag pole protection is solved by inserting the detached flag pole into a storage sleeve found either on the back or side of the housing's exterior.

The invention as described above overcomes the disadvantages of the current flag and flag pole storage techniques, which include, but are not limited to, the protection of multiple flags from damage, destruction, dirt, and wrinkles and the protection of a detached flag pole. Additionally, a convenient storage unit is created for the flag(s) and the detached flag pole.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The novel features of this invention, as well as the invention itself, both as to its structure and its operation, will be best understood from the accompanying drawings, taken in conjunction with the accompanying description, in which reference characters refer to similar parts, and in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a preferred embodiment of the flag caddy of the present invention having a rectangular shaped housing and showing the housing door in an open position exposing the round flag rods with a few rods (shown in dashed lines) in the outward position for the placement and removal of a flag (also shown in dashed lines);

Figure 2 is a perspective view of the flag caddy of the present invention of Figure 1, with the housing door closed, and showing the placement of an ornamental design on the front of the housing door;

Figure 3 is perspective view of the back side of the flag caddy of the

present invention showing the positioning of the flag pole storage sleeve and the insertion of a flag pole therein (shown in dashed lines), and showing the mounting hook for attaching the device to a rod or wall hook.

5 Figure 4 is a perspective view of the joint mechanism of the present invention and having a vertically stacked collection of round flag rods with tabs intended to retain a flag on the rod, and separated by a spacer in order to separate the rods to provide sufficient distance between the rods to accommodate flags of more than nominal thickness;

10 Figure 5 is a top view of the joint mechanism and round flag rods of the flag caddy as in Figure 4, showing the rotational range of motion of the flag rods, such as the 90 degree rotation and various other angles;

15 Figure 6 is a perspective view of an alternative preferred embodiment of the flag caddy of the present invention featuring flag rods formed with ball ends and having taller rod joints thereby eliminating the need for a spacer between the rod joints;

20 Figure 7 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the flag caddy of the present invention having a housing equipped with double doors and a stack of rectangular flag rods on the left and right sides of the housing, with the flag rods formed with cut-outs, and having tall rod joints, spacers (shown in dashed lines) and flag pole storage sleeve; and

Figure 8 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the flag

caddy featuring a close-up of an injection molded rectangular flag rod with cut-outs and tall rod joint providing sufficient strength to support even the most robust flag, as well as provide sufficient length for larger flags.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

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Referring initially to Figure 1 of the flag caddy of the present invention is shown and generally designated 100. Figure 1 shows a perspective view of a preferred embodiment of flag caddy 100 having a housing 101 with housing door 102 in its open position exposing round flag rods 104. Round
10 flag rods 104 are attached to joint mechanism 106 at one end and have tabs 108 attached at the opposite end. flags 110 (shown in phantom) may hang over round flag rods 104 and are kept from sliding off of round flag rods 104 by tabs 108. Hanger 112 is attached to the top section 114 of housing 101 and allows the flag caddy to be hung in a closet or on a hook in the garage.

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Joint mechanism 106 is connected to the vertical inner wall of housing 101 to support flag rods 104. Flag pole storage sleeve 116 is attached to the back of housing 101 to allow the storage of a flag pole (not shown in this Figure). Opening housing door 102 produces housing door range 120, which is large enough to allow a person to insert or remove one or many
20 flags 110 on round flag rods 104.

In a preferred embodiment, housing 101, housing door 102 and flag pole storage sleeve 116 may be composed of a semi-rigid fiberboard covered in nylon. In addition, housing 101, housing door 102 and flag pole storage sleeve 116 may be composed of polypropylene, plastic, wood, metal, composite plastics, or upholstery with plastic or paper backing, for example. A zipper 117 with a zipper handle 119 may be used to allow housing door 102, such as the stitch shown in Figure 1, to be completely integrated with housing 101. A magnet, two-part hasp, or other attachment device may also be attached to keep housing door 102 secured against housing 101 but also allow housing door 102 to open. The hasp may be equipped with a security lock for the safekeeping of the various flags contained within the present invention. Further, round flag rods 104 and tabs 108, may be composed of injection-molded plastic, such as ABS or polystyrene, or metal, or formed from an extruded or otherwise preformed rod-stock, or other materials described in this application or known in the art.

Housing 101 has width 122, height 124 and depth 126. In a preferred embodiment, width 122 may be thirty-two (32) inches, height 124 may be sixty-two (62) inches and depth 126 may range from two (2) to four (4) inches.

Referring now to Figure 2, the flag caddy of the present invention is shown in perspective with the housing door in a closed position safely

securing the flags 110 within housing 101 thereby avoiding exposure to sunlight, or dirt that would damage the flags 110. In this Figure, the present invention is shown having an image 127 of a flag on the door 102. While image 127 is depicted as a flag, it nevertheless should be appreciated that this image 127 is not limited solely to a flag. Rather, the image may be indicative of the collection of flags within the housing 101, or it may be symbolic of a group, such as a military insignia, for example.

Figure 3 is a perspective view of the backside of flag caddy 100 of the present invention and provides a clear view of the flag pole storage sleeve 116, and the hanger 112 that is provided to facilitate the easy hanging and positioning of the device. From this Figure, it is to be appreciated that the length of the flag pole 114 (shown in dashed lines) may extend beyond the device 100. It should be noted that width 142 of flag pole storage sleeve 116 is large enough to allow a detached flag pole 140 to be securely inserted. In a preferred embodiment, width 142 may be slightly larger than one (1) inch in diameter, which is the average diameter of detached flag pole 140.

Referring now to Figure 4, a perspective view of joint mechanism 106 connected to round flag rods 104 with tabs 108 is shown. Joint mechanism 106 is comprised of rod joints 130, support shaft 132, spacers 150 and

housing connector 152. Spacers 150 have heights 151, and are used to provide a gap between round flag rods 104 so that flags 110 may hang without contact from the above round flag rod 104. Further, housing connector 152 is connected to the inner vertical wall of housing 101 and maintains support shaft 132 in place. In a preferred embodiment, spacer 150 and housing connector 152 may be comprised of injection-molded plastic, such as polystyrene, or metal.

Turning to Figure 5, a top view of joint mechanism 106 and round flag rods 104 of flag caddy 100 are shown and demonstrate the range of motion 134 of round flag rods 104. Joint mechanism 106 is partly comprised of rod joints 130 and support shaft 132. Rod joints 130 are connected to and allow round flag rods 104 to rotate around support shaft 132 in range of motion 134. In a preferred embodiment, rod joints 130 may be comprised of injection-molded plastic, such as polystyrene, wood, or metal, or other materials described in this application or known in the art.

Range of motion 134 may be ninety (90) degrees, which is large enough to allow easy insertion or removal of flags. Further, rod joints 130 may be equipped with rotation springs (not shown) so that round flag rods 104 may be rotated outward for the positioning of the flag 110 on the rod 104, yet, will return to its original position once released

Figure 6 is a perspective view of an alternative preferred embodiment

of flag caddy 100 featuring round flag rods 104 with ball ends 160 and tall rod joints 162. Ball ends 160 are included to keep flags 110 from sliding off of round flag rods 104. Moreover, ball ends 160 may be smooth so they will not scrape or snag any material that flags 110 may be composed of. Tall rod joints 162 provide added leverage due to the increase in contact area and distance between tall rod joints 162 and support shaft 132. Height 164 of tall rod joints 162 is sufficiently large to support the heaviest flags 110 at a near-perpendicular position relative to support shaft 132. It should be noted that ball end 160 and tall rod joints 162 may be comprised of injection-molded plastic, such as polystyrene, or metal.

Figure 7 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the flag caddy of the present invention and is designated 200. Flag caddy 200 includes rectangular flag rods 202 formed with cut-outs 204, tall rod joints 206, having integral spacers 208 and flag pole storage sleeve 210. Housing 212 has two housing doors 214 that swing to reveal the entire inside of housing 212. Tall rod joints 206 and spacers 208 surround support shaft 216, which is held in place by two housing connectors 218 at each end of support shaft 216. Rod joint 206 and spacer 108 may be separate as shown by dashed line 207. Flag rods 202 are formed with cutouts 204 to minimize weight, yet provides sufficient strength to support even the most decorative

flag. It should be noted that rectangular flag rods 202 decrease in height as the distance away from tall rod joints 206 increase, and are intended to be positioned in the gaps 217 between the flag rods 202. This provides sufficient room for the storage of a flag that may have some significant thickness to it, as well as for the smooth hanging of multiple flags within the same housing 212.

Attached to the top of housing 212 is hook 220 that hangs on a nail or screw. On the side of housing 212 is flag pole storage sleeve 210 which contains detached flag pole 222 (in dashed lines). Housing doors 214 are mounted on hinges 215 and may be held in the closed position by magnets 230 on both the housing doors 214 and bottom portion of housing 212.

Figure 8 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the flag caddy 200 of the present invention featuring a close-up of rectangular flag rod 202 with cut-outs 204, tall rod joint 206 and height 240. It should be noted that height 240 is sufficiently large to provide sufficient leverage to support the weight of any flag that is hung on rectangular flag rod 202 substantially perpendicular to support shaft 116.

While the particular flag caddy as herein shown and disclosed in detail is fully capable of obtaining the objects and providing the advantages herein before stated, it is to be understood that it is merely illustrative of the presently preferred embodiments of the invention and that no limitations are

intended to the details of use, construction or design herein shown other than as described in the appended claims.